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Illinois State University
School of Music

The Music of Samuel Zyman

with

Kimberly McCoul-Risinger, Flute

David Feurzeig, Piano

Sarah Gentry, Violin

Paul Borg, Piano

Nina Gordon, Cello

Susan Brandon, Piano

Jennifer Christianson, Soprano

Patricia Foltz, Piano

Aris Chavez, Clarinet

Judith Dicker, Oboe

Michael Dicker, Bassoon

Joe Neisler, Horn



The Eightieth Program of the 2001-2002 Season.

*Kemp Recital Hall
Wednesday Evening
February 27, 2002
8:00 p.m.*

Program

from Sonata Concertante for Violin and Piano (1986)

Chaconne
Moto Perpetuo

Sarah Gentry, violin
Paul Borg, piano

"Solamente Sola" (Solely Alone), a cycle of four songs for soprano and piano on poems by Salvador Carrasco (1987)

Jennifer Christianson, soprano
Patricia Foltz, piano

Quintet for Winds (1989)

Allegro con spirito
Andante con moto
Tranquillo, liberamente-Allegro assai

Kimberly McCoul Risinger, flute
Judith Dicker, oboe
Aris Chavez, clarinet
Michael Dicker, bassoon
Joe Neisler, horn

Intermission

Fantasia for Cello and Piano (1994)

Nina Gordon, cello
Susan Brandon, piano

Sonata for Flute and Piano (1993)

Allegro assai
Lento e molto espressivo
Presto

Kimberly McCoul Risinger, flute
David Feurzeig, piano

Program Notes

Sonata Concertante for Violin and Piano (1986)

My Sonata Concertante for Violin and Piano was completed in 1986, while I was a doctoral student of David Diamond at Juilliard. The work was composed for and is warmly dedicated to my friend, the violinist Joyce Hammann, who premiered and recorded it. At the time I was writing the work (in 1985), a dear and life-long friend of my wife's and mine, Erik Klamroth, died tragically in an automobile accident. Thus, I also dedicated this sonata wholeheartedly to his memory. The structure of the work draws from a variety of traditional procedures. The first movement is in modified sonata form, the second is a chaconne (that is, a series of continuous variations on a short chord progression), and the third a spirited "moto perpetuo". Even though the piano plays the role of an equal partner in the sonata, the title "concertante" refers to the virtuosic and soloistic nature of the violin part. The outer movements are intensely rhythmical, contrapuntal, and syncopated, whereas the middle movement is largely meditative, introspective, and expressive.

"Solamente Sola" (Solely Alone), a cycle of four songs for soprano and piano on poems by Salvador Carrasco (1987)

Salvador Carrasco is a young and extraordinarily talented Mexican film director (he directed the 1998 movie "The Other Conquest"), writer, and poet with whom I have had a close artistic and personal friendship for many years. In 1987 he wrote his poetic cycle *Solamente Sola* especially for me to set to music. The resulting song cycle has since been performed several times in New York, including a concert given under the auspices of the American Composers Orchestra (ACO) at Weill Concert Hall of Carnegie Hall, with soprano Rachel Rosales and pianist Dennis Russel Davies, the conductor of the ACO. The text of "Solamente Sola" might be described as an inner searching dialogue of a woman with herself. Each poem begins with the same line, the question "why solely alone?". The musical settings explore the changing moods charted by the poems, which range from melancholy, introspection, and solitude, to despair, death, and hope. In setting the poems I have tried to add yet another layer to Carrasco's already richly symbolic and iridescent poetry. The poet himself has also written the English translations.

Solamente Sola is one of a few of my works in which I have deliberately sought to evoke a Spanish flavor, simply because the text seemed to suggest it to me. The poems, it is interesting to note, are through-composed and flow without punctuation. Therefore, while I have made no attempt at any strophic treatment in my setting (i.e., applying the same music to different sections of the text), recurrences of certain words and ideas in the text are often reflected by returns of musical themes, rhythmic motifs or turns of phrases. Each succeeding poem is longer than the previous one, the fourth being therefore the most extended. For its part, the music incorporates stark contrasts in tempo and character, following a fast-slow-fast-slow pattern. It seems to me that this has the effect of emphasizing the unhurried intensity of the last poem, which I have set as a quasi recitativo. Below are the English translations of the four poems:

I. Why solely alone
-in spite of the night-
do I recognize within myself
this silent woman
who shares with your absence
the ineffable nostalgia
of when amidst your lips
I would feel so lonely?

II. Why solely alone
do I recall this mirror
which haunts my memory
echoes tenderness
and keeps me from thirst
that satiates its cynicism
reflected before the void
of the baleful spectator
which floods the numb lament
with guilt that does not weep?

III. Why solely alone
do I seek in your touch
songs to contradict my senses
suspending to reason
the identity of your back
eroticized labyrinth
without reluctance to the surrender
into which I fall back with each verse
so as not to perceive my Death
as the skin of a rotten shadow
who in its illusion of romance
craves to fall in love with another one
and ceases being loved
while it evokes in its unconsciousness
the temporary hallowness of our bodies.

IV. Why solely alone
am I fatigued by the cadence
of truths sheared
by the lascivious yawning
with which I am judged captive
by the acrid voice of time
while it determines
whether to have time or not
to finish me or be silent
if it grows old or can not
fall in love once more
with a death that humiliates
the caresses in truce
with a slumber of treason
overbearing and dissimulated
by the nausea imposed upon me
by its agonizing births
of truths buried
desolate and crippled
that even though being allies
do not understand
my sincere lies
which the more they forget me
the more mutilated and lonely
solely alone
do I run away from the time of death.

Quintet for Winds (1989)

I completed my *Quintet for Winds* (flute, oboe, clarinet in Bb, bassoon and horn in F) in 1989 in New York City. On the initiative of then-bassoonist Martin Mangrum, the work was commissioned by the Manhattan Wind Quintet, an ensemble that has performed it in Connecticut and Long Island (New York). The work has also been performed by the Quintet of the Americas in New York and Chicago, and at the American Festival for the Arts (Jefferson T. Frazier, Music Director) by the Meliora Winds (Kirsten Larsen, flute; Keve Wilson, oboe; Stephen Williamson, clarinet; Susan Loegering, bassoon; Jill Williamson, horn) during their 1995 summer tour of cities throughout Texas, which included Houston, Austin, and Corpus Christi. The Meliora Winds have maintained this work prominently in their repertoire: it was the main composition they performed when they won first prize at the Young Concert Artists Competition a few years ago, and later performed it live on National Public Radio's program *Performance Today*, produced by Martin Goldsmith. The quintet is a fairly extended composition in three movements. The first movement (*Allegro con spirito*) is in sonata form, within which highly syncopated and agitated sections alternate with lyrical ones. The second movement (*Andante con moto*) is based on a recurring slow cantilena theme that is first presented by the clarinet in the key of Eb major. In the last movement (*Tranquillo-Allegro assai*), the cantilena theme is transformed into a fast spirited motif. Throughout the work I sought to create approximately equal opportunities for all five instruments to be featured as soloists or leaders, in an effort to highlight the marvelous timbral variety and richness that a wind quintet affords. As in many of my other compositions, I tried to emphasize in this quintet the use of forward-driving syncopated rhythms, imitative counterpoint, and expressive themes.

Fantasia for Cello and Piano (1994)

When world-renowned Mexican cellist Carlos Prieto asked me to write a new cello and piano work for him, as I recall, he used the word "Fantasy". Like so many other descriptive musical terms, this one has the potential to mean all manner of different things to different people. Freedom of form and the use of passages without a strict rhythmic pulse were notions that came to mind. As I thought more about it, I also began to develop some associations with baroque practice, since the baroque period was a time when quite a number of "Fantasias" were composed. Thus, I wrote a kind of short neo-baroque piece in one movement with various well-defined sections: a slow introduction, a plaintive non-metered section for the cello, the piano's reply to the latter, a fast and rhythmic fugato at the center of the work, a calmer "cantabile" section, and a return of the first three sections. In the various parts of the work the emphasis shifts from the melodic and thematic elements to the rhythmic ones (syncopations, cross-accents, etc.) and back again to the melodies. The Fantasy was completed in August of 1994, and was premiered shortly thereafter at the Americas Society in New York, by cellist Carlos Prieto and the extraordinary American pianist Ursula Oppens.

Sonata for Flute and Piano (1993)

My *Sonata for Flute and Piano* was written in 1993 on commission from my friend, the Mexican flutist Marisa Canales, to whom it is warmly dedicated, and who gave the world premiere of the work with pianist Ana María Tradatti in Mexico City. The US premiere of the sonata was presented by Venezuelan flutist Marco Granados at a National Flute Convention in Chicago a few years later. He maintains the work in his active repertoire, and has frequently performed it throughout the US and Europe. Flutist Kimberly Risinger has also performed the sonata on numerous occasions, including appearances with pianist Naoko Takao in 1999 at "Ars Vitalis", the New Jersey New Music Forum directed by composer Matthew Halper and held at the Wilkins Theatre of Kean University, and at Juilliard's Morse Hall. The first movement of the sonata is in an intense, highly charged, and restless style. It opens with an agitated and seemingly halting motif. As the movement progresses, we hear constant contrapuntal dialogues and chases between the flute and the piano. The flute part is often in the highest register. A calmer section in the center of the movement brings back the opening motif, now transformed into a reflective utterance. The slow second movement provides a contrasting introspective mood, established initially with the unaccompanied flute singing a theme vaguely inspired in Gregorian chant. Before long, the piano makes its entrance with fast cascading descending arpeggios. Overall, the feeling is mostly subdued and expressive. The last movement, *Presto*, is not only agile and fast paced, but is what I like to describe as a nearly reckless run forward, which pauses only at one section to bring back reminiscences of the opening motif of the previous movement.

Biography



Samuel Zyman was born in 1956 in Mexico City, where he studied piano and conducting at the National Conservatory of Music and composition with Mexican composer Umberto Hernandez Medrano. He received M.M. and D.M.A. degrees in composition from the Juilliard School, studying with the American composers Stanley Wolfe, Roger Sessions and David Diamond. He has been on the Juilliard faculty since 1987 as a member of the Department of Literature and Material (Music Theory). Zyman has received numerous awards and commissions from American and Mexican organizations, including a cello concerto commissioned from Absolut Vodka, written for the world-renowned Mexican cellist Carlos Prieto and premiered by the American Symphony Orchestra at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall. Dr. Zyman has also written two symphonies, concertos for piano, flute, guitar and harp, as well as other symphonic works, several chamber works, a sonata for solo guitar and vocal music.

Zyman composed the original symphonic score for the film, *The Other Conquest* (1997-1998), directed by Salvador Carrasco and produced by Alvaro Domingo. The score was recorded by the Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields, conducted by David Snell, and it includes the aria *Mater Aeterna*, performed by Placido Domingo. Zyman recently composed a Suite for Two Cellos (commissioned by cellists Carlos Prieto and Yo-Yo Ma), an expanded version of his *Concerto for Guitar* (commissioned by the Music in the Mountains Festival of California) and a *Piano Trio* for the Universidad Iberoamericana of Mexico City.

Zyman's works have been heard in concerts in the United States, Mexico, Argentina, Spain, France, Russia, Peru and Venezuela. Zyman's music is published by Theodore Presser Company and is recorded on Island Records, I. M. P. Masters and Urtext Digital Classics.